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"Succedyng in thy regne and in thy *rente*."
(B. 3572.)

"And, for that was the fruyt of al his *rente*,
Therefore on it he sette al his entente."
(D. 1372-1373.)

"I am a feend ; my dwelling is in helle,
And heere I ryde aboute my *purchasing*,
To wite wher men wol yeve me anything
My *purchas* is theeffect of al my *rente*.
Looke how thou rydest for the same entente :
To wyne good, thou rekkest never how."
(D. 1448-1453.)

The last quotation (from the *Friar's Tale*) comes nearest to the use in the passage under discussion, and it is difficult to see how Flügel's interpretation can be made to apply. The meaning of "purchasing" is fixed, not only by its general use in the sense of illegal gains, but by such passages in Chaucer as D. 1529, "And bothe we goon abouten oure *purchas*," and, finally, by the last two lines of the quotation, in which the summoner is advised to get money, whether by fair means or foul. These profits that are thus picked up here and there, says the fiend, are the substance of all my income : go thou and do likewise.

Thus far it seems clear (1) that the word "rent" in Chaucer's time, as now, might have the meanings "sum paid by another" and "sum paid to another"; (2) that when used in reference to income, it always had the sense of legal income, as contrasted with "purchas," which generally connotes practices of doubtful propriety; (3) that Chaucer's most frequent use of the word has the sense of "legal income," this being especially clear in the passage most closely parallel to the one under discussion. It is extremely probable, therefore, that Chaucer means to say of his friar, that he made more by unjust and dishonorable practices than the sum allowed him by his superior amounted to; in other words, he used graft and blackmail like a corrupt policeman. Fortunately further and this time apparently conclusive evidence is at hand.

There is a passage in one of the Towneley plays, written not far from Chaucer's time, in which almost the same phrase occurs, but in a context which admits of but one interpretation. In the play named *Coliphizacio*, Cayphas, who is characterized throughout as a corrupt government official, speaks as follows (stanza xviii) :

"Lad, I am a prelate, a lord in degre,
Syttys in myn astate as thou may se,
Knyghtys on me to wate in dyverse degre,
I myght thole the abate and knele on thi kne,
In my present ;
As euer syng I mes,
Whoso kepis the lawe, I gess,
He gettis more by purches
Then bi his fre rent,"

Which means, whoever has to do with governing (*kepis the lawe*) has it in his power to make more money through "graft" (*purches*) than he is entitled to by his legal income (*rent*).⁴ It is clear (1) that Flügel's interpretation will not fit this passage, the meaning being perfectly certain not only from the passage itself but from the characterization of Cayphas given by the context; (2) that we have here a use of the two words connected in a manner very similar to that of the line in the *Prologue*. If now we compare the four passages most closely parallel in construction, i. e., A. 256 and D. 1451, in Chaucer; the line from the *Romance of the Rose*, and the stanza from the mystery play, it seems safe to infer that we have a formula or stock expression for indicating the superiority of "graft" over more righteous methods of acquiring wealth.

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HERMANN UND DOROTHEA : A CONTESTED INTERPRETATION.

Professor Heller presents in the *Modern Language Notes* for January an interpretation of a passage in the ninth canto of *Hermann und Dorothea*, which has been suggested to him in the course of his instruction. He regards *er* (ix, 251) as relating, not to the subject of the principal sentence, but to the noun *Nachbar* in a pre-

⁴Pollard's gloss upon this passage (*English Miracle Plays*, &c., p. 233), is wholly inadmissible: "Who has the law in his keeping wins more by his profession than by his lands." The sense of "purchas," as already noted, is fixed by its continual application to illegal and improper gains; and there is no warrant for thinking that by "rent" Cayphas is thinking of any landed estates.

ceding sentence. The object of his explanation is to relieve the pastor from any apparent harshness or lack of tact in reminding Dorothea of an earlier engagement just as he is in the act of solemnly betrothing her to Hermann. The pastor catches sight of her previous engagement ring, and expresses the hope that her first lover may not present himself with a protest of objection. An effort is made to transfer this remark to the apothecary, since the pastor knew of Dorothea's earlier betrothal (canto vi, ll. 186-190). The surprise apparently expressed by the pastor (*stannend*) must either have been real, in which case he had forgotten the previous statement, or feigned. It is expressly stated that the words :

“Wie! du verlobest dich schon zum zweitenmal? Dass nicht der erste Bräutigam bei dem Altar sich zeige mit hinderndem Einspruch!”
ll. 254-255.

were spoken in jest, “mit freundlich scherzenden Worten,” and with kindly intent. The humor of the poet may not in this case be of the highest type, but we are not authorized to reject the obvious and natural translation on that account. Neither do citations of loose and irregular constructions in other authors justify the application of such anomalous uses to this passage, unless the sense obviously demands it. What is gained by transferring the language of the above lines to the apothecary? He was the companion of the pastor when the magistrate related the incident of the previous engagement of Dorothea, and was equally in possession of the fact. His surprise would be as much “feigned” as that ascribed to the pastor. The apothecary has not been represented previously in the poem as a man of humor, but rather as matter-of-fact, who guided his life by maxims and commonplace truths. Humor here would not be consistent with the character which he has hitherto been shown to possess. The pastor, on the contrary, has insight, and that comparative judgment which is the source of humor (vi, 303-310). He is the chief actor in the entire scene and naturally evokes the statement from Dorothea which follows.

The motive of the poet in introducing this question of the pastor was to afford an occasion for Dorothea to clear up that passage in her life which had occasioned so much solicitude to Her-

mann (canto vi, 101-102), which had received earlier mention (vi, 186-190), and to describe the friend whom she had lost, the noble motives in his life, and his renunciation, and thus prepare the way for the splendid characterization of the times (ix, 256-296) which Schlegel regarded as one of the finest passages in the poem.

The pastor could not have betrayed a knowledge of the earlier engagement without revealing his previous investigation of her history as related by the magistrate. He sought, therefore, indirectly to secure the explanation of the mystery attending her life, and from her own lips. The whole management of this incident on the part of the poet shows his mastery of dramatic as well as psychological effect.

To sum up : The construction of the sentence requires the accepted interpretation. The language in the mouth of the pastor is consistent with his character and not with that of the apothecary. The charge of harshness and lack of tact on the part of the pastor here would apply equally to his action in “testing the maiden” (ll. 110-111), when he evoked “the beautiful confession” (l. 208), which leads to the striking dramatic development in lines 134-181. So far from showing inconsistency or unkindness the action assigned to the pastor in this passage leads up to the highest and most essential revelation of the poem, and presents Dorothea in a higher and the most charming and loyal character. The actors as here presented are all consistent with their past, and the action here is essential to the plot.

Humboldt, who revised the proof sheets from the manuscript, saw no inconsistency here though he discussed almost every situation and even the choice of words. Holcroft and Mellish, who translated the poem into English and submitted their work to Goethe in manuscript, and the several translators into French, Latin and other languages whose work was reviewed by Goethe, received apparently no suggestion to change the accepted interpretation. The division of the canto into paragraphs is in the manuscript as in the Weimar edition. The accepted interpretation has, in my judgment, stronger claims to be the correct one than anything urged to the contrary.

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